

# PUBLIC INFORMATION



## IN CIVIL DEFENCE



*Public Information*  
*in*  
**CIVIL DEFENCE**



Produced for Civil Defence  
by  
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# CHAPTER I

## WHAT AND WHY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

The basic ingredient of good public relations is information. The Information Officer's job is to keep the public informed of what's going on in Civil Defence. If the CD organization is doing a good job and the IO is, too, then relations with the public will be good.

One of the main aims of CD is to prepare the public for meeting disaster. The press,



radio, television and other news media provide the only channel through which the IO can give information to the public, short of conducting street meetings or door-to-door canvasses.

The IO's chief duty, then, is to establish and maintain this channel of communication between Civil Defence and the public.

### TAKE THE LONG VIEW : BE CONSISTENT



This is not something that can be done overnight. All public relations programs must be planned for an extended period. Then they must be followed consistently to completion.

A year is the minimum time any public relations program should be given for effective fulfillment. A program planned over two or three years is preferable. It must then be carried out fully, from beginning through each stage to its conclusion, to be wholly effective.

## CHAPTER II

### AN INFORMATION PROGRAM'S OBJECTIVES AND OBLIGATIONS



#### FEDERAL HEADQUARTERS :

To keep provincial and municipal branches up to date on federal plans and progress affecting them ; and to keep abreast of provincial and local work.

To keep the public informed through the press, radio, TV and other news media of federal developments so that the provincial and municipal IO's will have their own ground to cover.

To give leadership and guidance through a consistent planned program.

#### PROVINCIAL HEADQUARTERS :



To keep the public informed of provincial CD developments.

To provide assistance, co-ordination and advice to municipal Information Officers.

To funnel all provincial CD information to the press, radio, TV and other news media.

To tie in federal programs on a provincial basis, supplementing and expanding regional details as necessary.

#### **MUNICIPAL HEADQUARTERS :**

To keep the public informed of municipal CD developments.

To tie in provincial and federal programs on a local basis.

To establish and maintain a link between municipal headquarters and every outlet for CD information in the area.

To co-operate fully with all organizations supplemented by or in any way involved with CD.

### **AN INFORMATION OFFICER'S QUALIFICATIONS**

The provincial IO should be on a paid basis and work full time. Experience as a newsman, in radio, TV or some related field seems essential. But background becomes less important if a person knows what news is and can present facts simply and directly. If a full-time provincial IO is unavailable immediately, perhaps a part-time IO or one on a volunteer basis might do temporarily.



The municipal IO, except in large cities, would be a volunteer, possibly a working press or broadcasting reporter. He, or she, must be able to put ideas across clearly and have a good working knowledge of CD.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **WHERE TO AIM INFORMATION**

#### **1**

#### **DAILY NEWSPAPERS :**

The CITY EDITOR is responsible for local news in a daily newspaper. He gives reporters their assignments, judges the importance of each news story and decides whether a CD item gets into the paper. Tell him you represent CD and where to reach you any time he wants information about CD. Just don't make a nuisance of yourself ; he is a busy man.

If possible, try to get to know reporters. No matter how well-written an IO's story may be, many newspapers, out of professional pride, prefer to have one of their own reporters or rewrite men rewrite an information release. This is particularly true in cities having more than one paper. It gives a paper a story different from the version other papers carry. If a reporter or rewrite man knows you, he might be more careful to do his best with your story.

If possible, make the acquaintance of a particular reporter, especially if he is interested in what Civil Defence is doing. City editors are busy men. But good reporters are usually glad to find a chance to dig up a story on their own, particularly if it lends itself to feature treatment. In this case, interest the reporter. Then let him interest the city editor. The reporter will do his best on this type of story — it might bring him a byline.

***When a Civil Defence event is planned, how do you interest the daily paper in it?***

Inform the city editor of it as soon as the date is set. Don't just telephone him. Drop in at his office and leave a typewritten announcement with all the pertinent facts. If it is impossible to deliver the announcement in person, mail it to him. He'll keep a written announcement on his spike or in his drawer; he might forget a telephone call or put off entering the details in his assignment book. And he likely will hand an announcement to a rewrite man for a brief advance item.

Remind him when the event is due. If it is a big one — the federal or provincial coordinator visiting or an important exercise — he will likely assign a reporter and a photographer to cover the story.

Prepare in advance double-spaced copies of a typewritten list of all the principals involved, including their first names, nicknames, if any, age, address, position, or any other identifying information.



Then let the reporter dig up his own story and the photographer take his own pictures. Stay nearby to provide all the co-operation necessary. Some reporters will need more of this than others.

***What about less interesting events? The routine?***

Most of your stories won't be this newsworthy. They will be about a new course, a small exercise being repeated, casualty simulation training, first aid classes, lectures. A daily newspaper usually can't spare a reporter to cover this kind of event. Dozens of organizations have similar activities regularly. So it is up to the IO to give the paper a story.

The best way to get it used is to keep it tight — under 300 words if possible — bright and accurate. Names are always news, but *spell them right and identify them correctly*. Human-interest angles always make good copy.

Be fast with the news. If a story can be written in advance of an event and given to the paper, chances of its publication are



multiplied. This is especially true of speeches. Deliver the story by hand — to-night. Tomorrow morning won't do.

Editors prefer a complete text of a speech so that they can have one of their rewrite men or reporters write their own story about it. But it is wise to include with the text a summary in which the IO can ensure that all the pertinent angles are covered.



Just mark it clearly at the top of both text and summary — "Advance for release in PMs, (that is, afternoon papers), June 12" or AMs, (morning papers), or for a specific time if necessary, for example: "Advance for release at 2:30 p.m. EDT, June 12." This

ensures the story will not appear in print before the event it describes has taken place.

### ***And as for pictures***

Keep in mind that a *good* picture is often better publicity than a news story.

If the newspaper isn't sending a photographer — always try for that first — it might be worth spending a few dollars to get a picture and submit it to the paper yourself. If you do, in the outline give names and correct initials of those shown and explain briefly but clearly what the picture is about.

Paste the outline below the picture — **NEVER ON THE BACK OF IT.** Anything written on the back of a picture might be revealed in engraving it for publication. Check with the editor for the preferred picture size and try to supply it to his specifications.

*Never go over the City Editor's head and appeal to the Publisher or Managing Editor.*

Don't be sensitive about cutting and revisions in your stories. The paper has only so much space. The City Editor knows how he wants a story written.

If your items are regularly unprinted, ar-



range to see the City Editor when he is not busy — between editions or after the last one. Ask him what you're doing wrong. Be prepared for a blunt answer.

### ***Don't forget the Editorial***

Editorials on larger papers are usually written by editorial writers. On smaller papers the managing editor or the publisher most often handles this assignment.

An editorial on CD can be very helpful. Get to know who writes the editorials on your paper and supply him occasionally with an idea on CD. Good editorial subjects would be "Civil Defence is everybody's business," "Civil Defence as a co-ordinator of existing services," "Civil Defence must be accepted by all to succeed."

One editorial a year is a good score in many papers. Don't try for one every month. When it appears, remember to thank the writer.



### ***There are special pages, too***

Special pages in the paper include the women's page, sports page and financial page.

Civil Defence activities involving women are of special interest to the women's page. See the Women's Editor. Let her know all about the CD program, especially as it involves women. Ask her what material she would like to have.

If Civil Defence is in any way involved with sports, see the Sports Editor.

### ***The Columnist can use you***

Columnists are glad to have suggestions. It isn't easy to fill their space regularly. But substantiate any good idea with facts and figures. He'll appreciate the work you save him.



Use a positive approach. Don't ask the columnist "How about a piece on Civil Defence?" Rather, suggest he might be surprised at the realism of a casualty simulation course or mention a CD volunteer worker who has a colorful career or background, or who has acquired some unusual knack in rescue work — any odd or catchy angle might appeal to the columnist.



### *Using Letters to the Editor*



The Letters-to-the-Editor section of some papers' editorial pages occasionally provides a chance for an IO to submit a letter outlining some facet of CD. But use this sparingly. Many editors ins-

tinctively feel writers of such letters just like to see their names in print. If in doubt, don't. Avoid getting involved in controversies in such columns. Nobody ever wins such battles.

### *But make it good!*

A regular CD column may be arranged, most likely on a weekly basis, if you can sell the city editor on the idea. Each must be self-contained, related and follow a logical sequence. If you can arrange for such a column and need editorial help to prepare material for it, advise provincial or federal headquarters.

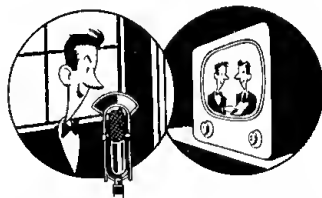
But REMEMBER - NO column is better than a regular column that is NOT done well. If you do get a column, make sure your copy is always in well before deadline. Nothing irritates a city editor more than to have this type of copy late.

### *The Annual Report*

An annual report, prepared as interestingly as possible, can obtain useful CD publicity. Describe the year's work, use as many names and statistics as possible without loading the report with dullness. Then send copies to the papers, radio and TV stations. Sometimes a condensation of the report, featuring outstanding or newsworthy events of the year, is useful for the news media.

## 2

### RADIO AND TELEVISION STATIONS



The NEWS ROOM, which many radio stations and most television stations have, is the best place to take or send information material.

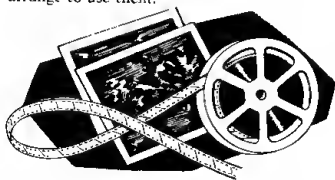
Most stations have a News Editor and many have a few reporters. So remember the radio and TV stations. They are anxious

to carry local news. Always send them copies of information releases or speeches and invite them to send representatives to any of your activities.

Radio and TV stations will frequently record an interview with an interesting personality, particularly a visitor. Call the news editor and see whether he is interested when a VIP comes to town.

A REGULAR CD PROGRAM may be arranged over some stations through the Program Director. If so, remember again — NO program is better than a POOR program. And see that material used is NOT obsolete.

TV stations occasionally will use a picture to illustrate a news item about CD. But check with your local TV station on the type of shots it might be interested in first. TV stations usually have certain print sizes and other specifications for any such pictures they might use. Sometimes, too, TV stations can use CD films. Check with Provincial or Federal Headquarters for films available and arrange to use them.



## 3

### THE WIRE SERVICES

The Canadian Press and British United Press serve most of Canada's daily newspapers and radio stations with national and regional news. They have offices in major cities and correspondents throughout the country.

The local daily paper is usually a member of CP and acts as the service's correspondent for that area. Often a reporter on the paper is a BUP correspondent. So for anything that might have an interest outside your immediate area, get in touch with the correspondent or the nearest office of CP and BUP.

CP also has a picture service. But pictures must have a national interest, through an unusual human interest angle, a disaster, a large Civil Defence exercise.

Both agencies distribute news to radio and TV stations on a local basis in many areas. So remember them when you have information releases.

## 4

### THE WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS

Often it is easier to give information through a weekly newspaper than a daily. Usually the editor does just about everything on a weekly. So he will be glad to have publishable stories handed in to him.

Since the weekly depends for its interest almost entirely on local news, it will often print a story of some purely regional interest

that a daily serving the same area will not reproduce. Because of the weekly's local interest, it is especially anxious for as many names of local people as a story will hold. **GET THE NAMES CORRECT** and include street addresses whenever possible.

## CHAPTER IV

### SOME WRITING RULES TO REMEMBER

1. Check to see that all the questions arising about a situation or event have been answered ---- who? what? why? where? when? how? Get the answers into the story as near the top as possible.
2. Write clearly, simply, tightly. Don't try to dramatize.
3. Straightforward writing with well-known words in simple constructions assures clarity. Avoid big words and technical terms.
4. Be direct. State facts without moralizing or editorializing. Get to the point in the first paragraph.
5. If the lead eludes you, imagine you are telling the facts to a friend. Where would you start?

6. To test an item's human interest appeal, compare it with the news stories your wife and mother remembers at the breakfast table.

### PLAY NO FAVORITES !!



Give your stories to all interested news media. Don't play off one against another. You'll never get away with it. They all know each other. They'll soon catch on to such tricks.

But if a reporter from one news media calls you on his own initiative for information that will give his paper or radio or TV station a scoop, *don't voluntarily tip the competitors before the reporter's story is used.* If a competing reporter calls about the same thing on *his own*, of course, give him the information, too.

## AND KEEP IN MIND

The writing quality of your story isn't so important as getting all the facts — correct — into it. After all, it may be rewritten just on general principle anyway. So don't make it too hard for the rewrite man! Besides, getting CD information to the public is an



IO's primary concern, not producing literature.

Make sure it has local interest. Names of local persons always help to ensure this.

If you want to get into everybody's doghouse as fast as you can, try to use pressure by, say, getting a large advertiser to use his influence.

Again be accurate. Never guess at names, initials or addresses. It is better to give what you know and say the rest is unknown to you.

And listen — don't be a know-it-all. Reporters and editors can give you good advice if you let them.

Avoid giving the impression of "cultivating" newsmen. They don't want an IO to butter them up constantly to keep them in a good mood. It embarrasses them. Be as friendly as good manners and a pleasant outlook indicate. Don't "soft-soap" newsmen.

All news copy including advances of speeches and press releases should be typewritten on one side of the paper only and *double-spaced*. Use normal-sized paper.

*Don't* aim to refute small mistakes. The reporter himself has probably already spotted his blunder and if he isn't kicking himself about it, the city editor soon will be.

## WATCH THAT TIMING

The timing an IO uses in providing material to the various media is very important. It should be varied according to the deadline of the papers at which the material is aimed, or the time a TV or radio program is made up.



If the material is "hot" it likely will be used by a paper the same day even if it is not available until a short time before the final deadline.

Material that is not so "hot", however, has a better chance of getting used if it is turned in a day or two before, or even the night before, since most papers have at least a skeleton staff working at night. If such material is brought in only an hour or two before that day's or that program's deadline, you can be almost certain it won't be used that day.

## CHAPTER V



### WHAT MAKES NEWS ?

Something new, fresh, timely, strange, terrible, informative anything that will interest newspaper readers, radio listeners, TV

viewers. News must have significance. It must be reported when it happens — not some time afterwards.

A new CD class is news when it opens. Names of persons completing any course — whether a new one or one often repeated — are news. If a father, son and grandson all take the same course, that is good local news. If the great-grandfather takes it, too, that is national news.

### NEWS CAN BE MADE



News is not created through cheap stunts. But imagination can transform many routine events into newsworthy ones.

When a new CD branch is officially opened, for example, get the mayor or some similar personage to inspect it and cut the ribbon. Get the high school principal to sign up for

the first class in a new CD course. Let a reporter act as the "victim" in a rescue demonstration. Invite a well-known doctor to attend a casualty simulation course.

These are the kind of events that provoke city editors into sending out a news photographer and giving the story feature treatment. They will attract radio announcers with tape recorders and TV cameramen.

## KEEP IN TOUCH WITH YOUR OUTLET



Send out copies of CD literature that might prove newsworthy or informative. Invite newsmen to CD functions. Arrange press conferences with newsworthy visitors. But don't make a pest of yourself.

Strive for a reputation among newsmen as an IO who provides *only* newsworthy copy. If you become known as a dispenser of propaganda, you and your organization are sunk as far as the news media are concerned.

## HANDLING SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

### Disasters :

Someone — the IO if possible — should be assigned immediately to direct information to news media from the disaster scene. Contact should be established at once with newspapers, radio and TV stations, CP and BUP if all are in the area. Forget about office hours ; you are there for the duration,

Be careful with figures for tolls of dead and injured. If an estimate must be made, err on the conservative side.

Aim always at providing first the most newsworthy information. Then watch for opportunities to supply CD information or pictures to supplement coverage by newsmen.

Be prepared to provide radio and TV stations with articulate persons for interviews on the scene. Be available. Be helpful but not intrusive. Try to provide means of passing newsman stories "outside" if normal communications (telephone, telegraph) are not available.

Afterwards, issue a comprehensive review of the CD organization's part in meeting the disaster. If possible, attribute it to a CD official. And be generous in giving credit to all others involved. Be honest.



### *Meetings, Demonstrations :*



These provide two opportunities to get a story used — before and after.

A day or two before, issue a release describing the event in two or three paragraphs, or more depending on its news value. Afterwards, issue a more complete release giving names and details. Avoid duplicating the earlier release. Avoid padding.

Watch for picture possibilities.

### *Civil Defence exercises :*



The information program will depend on the extent of the exercise. It may involve

Provincial as well as Local Headquarters and may also include Federal officials. The same general principles apply. Send out material — stories and pictures, if possible — well in advance of the exercise.

Let newsmen know in advance where to get information.

In releases, outline objectives of the exercise and its purpose ; the number of participants ; how it compares to other exercises ; the names, ages, addresses of all newsworthy participants.



Start feeding material to news media several days in advance. Send something new daily, if possible and warranted.

Once the exercise is under way, keep the facts coming out of information headquarters. Reporters likely will be there to get them. If not, send out releases as new facts become available. Or telephone the various media. Make certain you treat all equally.

If the news source is remote from normal means of communications, try to see that newsmen are provided with fast, reliable communications.

Issue morning and nightly summaries. Morning papers want developments right up to their last deadline, which may be midnight or later.

An evaluation of success at the end of the exercise, with comments from its leaders, is essential.

### *Speaking engagements :*



Service club luncheons and dinners, church groups, women's and charitable organizations, public service and similar groups all provide an opportunity for persons to speak on Civil Defence. The IO should be prepared to do some of this work himself.

The president or secretary of these organizations usually arranges for speakers.

### *Recruiting Drives :*

Start a recruiting drive only when there are duties for new members to perform.

Make certain prospective recruits are properly welcomed and put at ease.

A week-long campaign might run something like this :

*Monday* — announcement of drive objectives

*Tuesday* — picture of drive chairman

*Wednesday* — picture of mayor greeting first recruits

*Thursday* — item on reasons for Civil Defence and drive's success so far

*Friday* — editorial

*Saturday* — assessment of drive's success and list of new members.

This could be expanded for recruiting drives in neighboring communities or to a provincial basis through setting up one over-all publicity committee, with possibly newspaper, radio, TV and advertising men sitting on it. This committee prepares a detailed publicity plan for the area.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE INFORMATION OFFICER'S PLACE IN CIVIL DEFENCE

The IO is the link between the Civil Defence organization, on whatever level, and the media through which the public can best be reached.

He owes it to the CD organization and to the public to be honest and fair. It might be arguable in some instances whether the public is always capable of digesting and facing the truth about all things. That's a problem for policy-makers and philosophers, not the IO.

Honesty is the Information Officer's best policy.

Naturally, the IO must have a thorough knowledge of Civil Defence. He should sit in on policy discussions to ensure that CD's worst foot won't be put forward. He can often, in this way, avoid errors before they are made.

But questions of policy are the responsibility of the Civil Defence Co-ordinator or elected legislative officers. When in doubt, the IO should check with the co-ordinator before answering any questions of policy. But the IO should know policy, once it is set, and be prepared to discuss it when necessary. The IO should not have to check with the co-ordinator every time the word policy is mentioned.

The ideal CD Information Officer has a photographic memory, immense but uncloying personal charm, an unlosable temper, a lot of knowledge about as many things as possible, especially Civil Defence, a telephone number available to newsmen 24 hours a day, seven days a week, more patience than Job, tolerance, tact, gall, insight, wit, and a constitution of iron.

No IO will ever achieve this ideal, but every good one must never forget that good public relations is not won easily or quickly. Yet they can be spoiled in a moment without an effort.



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